

# The Italian and Late Byzantine City

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Max Weber's typological characterization of the city is not very popular with scholars of Byzantium, even though we follow, albeit tacitly, his major observation—the contrast between the ancient and medieval city, or, expressed in economists' terms, between the city of producers (*Produzentenstadt*) and that of consumers (*Konsumentenstadt*).<sup>1</sup> It is a traditional view of Byzantinists that on the main territory of the empire the ancient city survived,<sup>2</sup> and even Ernest Kirsten, who acknowledges the so-called urban crisis of the seventh century, drastically contrasts late Byzantine urban centers with those of western Europe. In his words, “the Byzantine empire of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries still stood on the niveau that was . . . achieved in North Italy in the tenth century.”<sup>3</sup> The independence of individual regions, he emphasizes, was based here not on trade “as it was in Western Europe,” but on the military needs of defense; the urban privileges mention no craftsmen or merchants or organs of self-administration. The urban patriciate was yet to be developed; “unlike Venetian territories” Byzantium had no special privileges for the city nobility, and the *Bürger* remained primarily the owner of land. In the same manner Michael Angold characterizes the late Byzantine cities as “centers of consumption” and “communities of landowners.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>M. Weber, *The City*, English tr. Don Martindale and G. Neuwirth (New York-London, 1958), 80 f. For a good analysis of Weber's views on the city, see A. I. Neusychin, *Problemy evropejskogo feodalizma* (Moscow, 1974), 464–95. H. Samsonowicz (“Les villes d'Europe centrale à la fin du moyen-âge,” *Annales* 43 [1988], 173) calls Weberian models of European and Asian cities “provocative.” For a critical evaluation of Weber's theory from the position of modern medieval studies, see D. Herlihy, *Cities and Society in Medieval Italy* (London, 1980), art. XI, pp. 174–81; on Weber's views on market capitalism in antiquity and the development of urban life in the Middle Ages, see J. R. Love, *Antiquity and Capitalism: Max Weber and the Sociological Foundation of Roman Civilization* (London-New York, 1991), 211–45.

<sup>2</sup>F. Dölger, *Die frühbyzantinische und byzantinisch beeinflusste Stadt* (Spoleto, 1958), 4. The concept of the preservation of the ancient polis in Byzantium was defended consistently by M. Ja. Sjužjumov. See, on him, M. A. Poljakovskaja, *Ocenka perioda genezisa vizantijskogo feodalizma v trudach M. Ja. Sjužjumova. Antičnaja drevnost' i srednie veka* (Sverdlovsk, 1988), 13–16.

<sup>3</sup>E. Kirsten, “Die byzantinische Stadt,” *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten Kongress* (Munich, 1958), III, 36.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 35–40; M. Angold, “The Shaping of the Medieval Byzantine ‘City,’” *ByzF* 10 (1985), 35–37. According to A. Harvey (*Economic Expansion in the Byzantine Empire: 900–1200* [Cambridge, 1989], 202), “Byzantine towns, like their late Roman predecessors were centers for the consumption of surplus wealth appropriated from the rural economy.” In the same vein, Z. V. Udalcova (“Les villes de l'Empire byzantin et des

In fact, there are many features that allow us to contrast city life in Byzantium in the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries and that in northern Italy of the same time: Italian towns became independent communities, while the late Byzantine city was subject to the central administration; Italian merchants dominated over a significant part of the Mediterranean, including the Byzantine Empire itself, whereas we hear so little about Byzantium's trade expansion; the advanced Italian towns created banks, trade companies, and manufacture, whereas in Byzantium the marks of the "new" economy were barely noticed; and, certainly, with all respect to Byzantine scholars and painters of the fourteenth century, they did not attain the brilliance of the Florentine Renaissance.

The north Italian economy of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries has been frequently characterized as "capitalist" or at least "pre-capitalist," whereas few scholars would dare accept these epithets for late Byzantium. It is not simple to define the notion of pre-capitalism, and I shall avoid doing so here. If I nevertheless use it eventually, due to a slip of the pen or for the sake of convenience, I shall mean the situation "as it existed in Florence." I understand that this is not a scientific definition, but I have no better one, and I anticipate that it will suffice for my modest purposes. The real problem, however, is not in terminology. The problem is whether this obvious contrast between Byzantium and Italy should be interpreted as the sign of typological diversity or as no more than variegations within one and the same typological pattern. Two points must be stressed before we turn to the investigation of concrete source material.

In the first place, the Western medieval town cannot be considered uniform: the studies of recent decades have placed emphasis on the multiformity of the genesis of the medieval town and of its economic, political, and social organization. On the one hand, scholars posited the existence of numerous "urban landscapes" (*Stadtlandschaften*) in western Europe: thus Edith Ennen lists six main "urban landscapes," namely that of the Mediterranean, Bordeaux, the area between the Seine River and the Rhine, the Hanseatic region, Freiberg in Saxony, and southern Germany. In Italy alone she itemizes three "sub-landscapes": northern maritime centers (Genoa, Pisa, and Venice), the continental cities of Tuscany (Florence and its neighbors), and Naples as an "early capital."<sup>5</sup> This geographic cataloguing has the advantage of objectivity: nobody will doubt that Genoa was a maritime center located in northern Italy or that Florence was the economic and cultural hub of Tuscany. The objectivity, however, begins to shatter as soon as we ask whether all the Tuscan towns bore the same character, and whether, for instance, Florence and Pistoia belonged to the same urban landscape.

Dissatisfaction with the purely geographic cataloguing of urban landscapes led, on the other hand, to attempts to categorize medieval towns on the basis of sociological models; an effort of this kind was made by the Soviet scholar Vera Stoklickaja-Tereškovič, in an article entitled "The Problem of Variety of the Medieval Guild in the West and in Rus',"<sup>6</sup> Rus' evidently being added for patriotic rather than scholarly reasons. According

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pays de l'Europe occidentale au moyen-âge [observation typologiques]," *Byzantina* 13.2 [1985], 1,550 f) stresses a radical contrast between "the incessant upsurge of the urban centers" in the West and the inability of the Byzantine cities to transform "the feudal economy of the country."

<sup>5</sup>E. Ennen, *Die europäische Stadt des Mittelalters* (Göttingen, 1972), 149–98. I was unable to use the fourth edition of the book (Göttingen, 1987).

<sup>6</sup>V. V. Stoklickaja-Tereškovič. "Problema mnogoobrazija srednevekovogo cecha na Zapade i na Rusi," *Srednie veka* 3 (1951), 74–102.

to Stoklickaja-Tereškovič, two major factors determined the structure of the medieval guild (and subsequently of the medieval urban economy)—the guild hierarchy (two tier or three tier) and state control over production and trade. It is not my intention now to test Stoklickaja-Tereškovič's conclusions; suffice it to say that the principle of modeling allows us to organize the data on medieval urban life beyond the physical neighborhood. We may expect, for instance, a structural similarity between Dubrovnik and remote Hanseatic Lübeck or between Constantinople and Paris.

In the second place, modern scholarship questions the traditional "Romantic" idea of a sharp opposition between the medieval town and the feudal countryside; the town and the rural environment were two elements of the same structure, closely interwoven rather than opposed to each other.<sup>7</sup>

If modern scholarship seems to have mitigated the Weberian opposition of the European (Italian) and Asiatic (Byzantine) city, there is one item that makes comparison of Italian and Byzantine cities of the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries extremely embarrassing—the drastic difference with regard to the source material. The scholar of the Italian city has no reason to lament a shortage of sources; his concern is to find in the "large and heterogenous mass of data a sound basis for generalization."<sup>8</sup> The Byzantinist does not have at his disposal sources of the kind of the Florentine Catasto of 1427, which, with all its shortcomings taken into consideration, supplies the historian with complete data on taxes, property, and household structures in the city and its vicinity, or Ricordi, domestic chronicles that survived by the hundreds. The Byzantinist nibbles his food from dispersed and isolated texts, sometimes documentary, sometimes narrative, often from Italian informants, and is doomed, by the character of his sources, to restrain from asking the questions that are natural for Italian counterparts.

Some of these questions are of first-rate importance, especially those relating to the organization of production. We have detailed knowledge of the organization of Florentine manufacture, but did manufacture exist in Byzantium? To the best of my knowledge, this question has not even been raised by Western Byzantinists, whereas Soviet scholars have discussed it ardently, with Valentin Smetanin being the main proponent of the idea that Byzantium created the manufactural type of production and Igor Medvedev denying its existence.<sup>9</sup> The sources for this subject are scanty, if not nonexistent. Smetanin's main argument is a sentence in Akropolites,<sup>10</sup> who asserted that in large poleis of the Nicaean empire there were craftsmen producing for a payment (ἐπὶ μισθῷ) bows, arrows, and other weaponry; their production was stored (ἀποτιθέντας) in superabundant quantity in the state storehouses. There is not a single word in Akropolites concerning manufactural organization: weaponry was fabricated by individual craftsmen and thereafter

<sup>7</sup>O. Brunner, "Stadt und Bürgertum in der europäischen Geschichte," in his *Neue Wege der Sozialgeschichte* (Göttingen, 1956), 80–97, was one of the most efficient critics of this "Romantic idea." D. Herlihy, whose works are abundantly quoted below, applied this "anti-Romantic" approach to the cities of Italy, particularly those of Tuscany.

<sup>8</sup>D. Herlihy, *The Social History of Italy and Western Europe, 700–1500* (London, 1978), art. VII, p. 174.

<sup>9</sup>I. P. Medvedev, "The Problem of So-called Byzantine Manufacture," *Byzantiaka* 9 (1989), 207–28, where a vast bibliography is collected; V. A. Smetanin, "Osobennosti gorodskogo remesla v Vizantii XIII–XV vekov i vosstanie naemnykh rabočich v Konstantinopole v 1372–1373 godach," *Srednevekovyj gorod* 6 (Saratov, 1981), 134–36. In the same fascicle is published a note by V. N. Zavražin, "K voprosu o pozdnevizantijsloj manufakture" (p. 136 f), critical of Smetanin's thesis.

<sup>10</sup>*Georgii Acropolitae opera*, ed. A. Heisenberg, I (Leipzig, 1903), 285.15–22.

gathered in *demosioi oikoi*. The same system existed in Byzantium earlier, and had nothing in common with “pre-capitalist” production in Florence.

The Italian textile industry dominated the Constantinopolitan market. Klaus-Peter Matschke quite ingeniously demonstrates that the situation in Thessalonike was more beneficial for local producers; he surmises that the weavers of the sumptuous imperial attire in the fourteenth century worked in their individual workshops and attained substantial social prestige.<sup>11</sup> But what was the quality of their production in comparison with Italian goods? The Greek and Italian sources gathered by Matschke seem to be silent with respect to this question, but there is a French document, omitted by Matschke, that sheds unexpected light on the subject: the French king Louis XI settled in Tours in 1470 a group of artisans, producers of silk cloth, invited from Italy and Greece (then occupied by the Turks), among whom was a woman;<sup>12</sup> in the eyes of the French ruler, there was no cardinal difference between Italian and Greek craftsmen, at any rate between those who were involved in the fabrication of sumptuous silks.

Another important indicator of “pre-capitalist” development was the achievements of metallurgy. Decisive progress in the technology of metallurgy took place in Lombardy beginning in the thirteenth century.<sup>13</sup> We practically know nothing of what was happening in the Byzantine mining industry and metal production during this period.<sup>14</sup> Closer to the Byzantine frontier than Lombardy lay the mines of Serbia, of which Novo Brdo was the most significant.<sup>15</sup> The Byzantines knew this center of metallurgy; Kritoboulos of Imbros describes it as a fortified and rich town where a great amount of silver and gold was “cultivated.”<sup>16</sup> To what extent Novo Brdo, which flourished in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, had an impact on Byzantium we can only hypothesize.

In order to demonstrate the drastic difference in the Byzantine and Western approaches to technological innovations, scholars often refer to the letter dispatched by Bessarion to the despot of Morea in 1444 in which the cardinal praises Western glass, textiles, weapons, ships, and especially water wheels operating both sawmills and the bellows of blast furnaces.<sup>17</sup> Certainly, the level of technology in fifteenth-century Italy was

<sup>11</sup>K.-P. Matschke, “Tuchproduktion und Tuchproduzenten in Thessalonike und in anderen Städten und Regionen der späten Byzanz,” *Byzantiaka* 9 (1989), 47–87. Compare also his very interesting observations on the “flexibility” of the late Byzantine artisanal family—one craftsman could combine different professions, the son was not obliged to follow his father’s craft, and so on: idem, “Bemerkungen zu den Mikro- und Makrostrukturen der spätbyzantinischen Gesellschaft,” *XVIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies: Major Papers* (Moscow, 1991), 157–60. On the earlier stage of the Byzantine textile industry, see D. Jacoby, “Silk in Western Byzantium before the Fourth Crusade,” *BZ* 84/85 (1991/92), 452–500.

<sup>12</sup>Eug. Müntz, “Les artistes byzantins dans l’Europe latine du Ve au XVe siècle,” *Revue de l’art chrétien* 36 (May 1893), 190.

<sup>13</sup>F. Menant, “Pour une histoire médiévale de l’entreprise minière en Lombardie,” *Annales* 42 (1987), 779.

<sup>14</sup>The pioneering work in the field is by S. Vryonis “The Question on the Byzantine Mines,” *Speculum* 37 (1962), 1–17. Since, extensive material has been collected by K.-P. Matschke, “Zum Anteil der Byzantiner an der Bergbauentwicklung und an den Bergbauerträgen Südosteuropas im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert,” *BZ* 84/85 (1991/92), 49–71. His conclusion, however, is very pessimistic: “Byzanz konnte sehr wahrscheinlich keinen nennenswerten eigenen Bergbau mehr entwickeln.”

<sup>15</sup>M. J. Dinić, *Za istoriju rudarstva u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji i Bosni* (Belgrade, 1962), 27–67.

<sup>16</sup>*Critobuli Imbriotae Historiae*, ed. D. R. Reinsch (Berlin-New York, 1983), 98.10–12; cf. Ducas, *Istoria turco-bizantina*, ed. V. Grecu (Bucharest, 1958), 263.1.

<sup>17</sup>L. White, *Medieval Religion and Technology* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1978), 223 f. White explains Bessarion’s technological interest by the fact that he “had become Latinized in more than his religion.”

higher than in Constantinople, but Bessarion's letter has another aspect as well: it shows that the Byzantine classicist and theologian was not alien to technological advancement and overtly admitted their importance for the survival of Morea.

Our written data on Byzantine craftsmanship are sketchy. The best that can be done (and some scholars have done it) is to establish lists of artisanal professions mentioned in Byzantine and Italian sources.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, this work has not yet been completed: had we compared these lists with the series of artisanal professions in the tenth through twelfth centuries we might already have some results; by so doing we could, at least, answer the question whether the division of labor in late Byzantium remained the same as in previous centuries or whether we can observe a progression (regression?) in industrial organization. At the same time, a comparison with catalogues of artisanal professions in advanced Italian cities could have provided us with the means of comparing the two economies. Such a listing, however, would be of very relative significance, since Byzantine terminology was imprecise, and the existence of different terms does not always demonstrate the existence of a developed division of labor.

We know more about Byzantine trade than about craftsmanship. Extensive material on this topic has been collected by Angeliki Laiou,<sup>19</sup> whose 1980/81 article on this topic consists of two parts. The conclusion of the first part is described by the author herself as "sad." She states: "The Byzantine economy had first entered the international market of the Eastern Mediterranean in the thirteenth century when this market was being developed. The Byzantines participated in the economy of exchange. Some made money out of it, but they did not control it; their economic activities were secondary and tied to the dominant Italian merchant capital" (p. 216). The second part is a supplement written after the article was accepted for publication and is based on sources that had then only recently become available, particularly the newly discovered register of Genoese notary Antonio di Ponzò;<sup>20</sup> these documents, she stresses, do "make a difference" (p. 217). This difference, or new conclusions, is formulated as follows: "One [conclusion] is that Thrace

<sup>18</sup>N. Oikonomidès, *Hommes d'affaires grecs et latins à Constantinople (XIIIe-XVe siècles)* (Montreal-Paris, 1979), 94–107; V. A. Smetanin, *Vizantijskoe obščestvo XIII–XV vekov po dannym epistolografii* (Sverdlovsk, 1987), 76–100; S. P. Karpov, *Trapezundskaja imperija i zapadnoevropejskie gosudarstva v XIII–XV vv.* (Moscow, 1981), 27–29 (for the Italian translation: *L'impero di Trebizonda, Genova e Roma, 1204–1461* [Rome, 1986]). The information is based primarily on Italian documents of 1292: "I conti dell'ambasciata al chan di Persia nel MCCXCII," *Atti della società ligure di storia patria* 13 (1877–84).

<sup>19</sup>A. E. Laiou-Thomadakis, "The Byzantine Economy in the Mediterranean Trade System: Thirteenth–Fifteenth Centuries," *DOP* 34/35 (1980/81), 177–222; reprinted in her *Gender, Society and Economic Life in Byzantium* (Ashgate, 1992), art. VII. On the commercial relations of the Greeks in Constantinople with the Venetian and Genoese merchants, see also her "Un notaire vénitien à Constantinople: Antonio Bresciano et le commerce international en 1350," in M. Balard, A. E. Laiou and C. Otten-Froux, *Les Italiens à Byzance* (Paris, 1987), 89 f. Cf. also B. Krekić, *Dubrovnik, Italy and the Balkans in the Late Middle Ages* (London, 1980), art. xv, pp. 187–91; S. P. Karpov, "Ital'janskaja trgovlja v Trapezunde i ee vozdejstvie na ekonomiku pozdnevizantijskogo goroda," *VizVrem* 44 (1983), 81–87; cf. idem, "Torgovlja zernom v Južnom Pričernomor'e," *VizVrem* 50 (1989), 26–35, and the English version, "The Grain Trade in the Southern Black Sea Region: The Thirteenth to the Fifteenth Century," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 8 (1993), 55–73. The social importance of the marketplace in the late Byzantine town is underlined by A. Kioussopoulou, "Lieux de communication et ville byzantine tardive," *BSI* 54 (1993), 285.

<sup>20</sup>M. Balard, "Notes sur les ports du Bas-Danube au XIVe siècle," *Südost* 38 (1979), 1–12. Since then, other Italian archives have become available: see, e.g., Balard, Laiou, and Otten-Froux, *Les Italiens à Byzance*; A. Roccatagliata, *Notai genovesi in Oltremare: Atti rogati a Pera e Mitilene*, 2 vols. (Genoa, 1982); M. Balard, *Notai genovesi in Oltremare* (Genoa, 1983–86); L. Balletto, *Notai genovesi in Oltremare* (Genoa, 1989).

seems to have exported grain in the late fourteenth century, something one would not have expected. Secondly, the Byzantine aristocracy and the Emperor himself . . . were involved in trade with the Genoese in this period, including trade in grain" (p. 220). Moreover, Laiou paints "a vivid picture of Greek traders and financiers who were in close connection with each other and with the Genoese" (p. 221). In other words, new publications made our perception of Byzantine trading activity, especially after the 1360s, less "sad," and this historiographical trend deserves an elaboration.

We have no Byzantine account books that can be compared to the Italian *libri dei conti*, one of which, that of Giacomo Badoer, is a unique source for the study of Constantinopolitan trade in 1436–40.<sup>21</sup> The fragments of Greek ledgers that are available give us catalogues of goods traded,<sup>22</sup> but not of the volume of merchandise in circulation. Some occasional figures can be gathered from patriarchal documents: thus, we read about a deposit of squirrel fur from Vlachia that was eventually sold (ca. 1400) for 587 hyperpyra; another document of the same time gives the estimate of the value of *tzoches* (woolen textile) stolen from an *ergasterion*—700 hyperpyra.<sup>23</sup> Certainly, these figures cannot be compared with the annual turnover of Badoer (approximately 126,000 hyperpyra), but we have to take into consideration that they reflect only a part of the merchandise dealt with in each case.

We know very little about Byzantine banking, whereas Italian banking can be studied in detail;<sup>24</sup> debts and especially *hypothekai* often appear in the acts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but we are unable to judge whether these credit operations were typical medieval transactions, borrowing in the case of necessity that led, in the final account, to the ruin of debtor,<sup>25</sup> or "pre-capitalist" productive loans. Recently D. Gofas drew attention to the fact that bills of exchange existed on Crete in the fourteenth century,<sup>26</sup> but we do not know whether their use was limited to (Venetian) Crete or whether they were introduced into Byzantine banking operations as well. While Italy dared to praise avarice, without which, in the words of Poggio Bracciolini, "society would

<sup>21</sup> *Il libro dei conti di Giacomo Badoer*, ed. U. Dorini and T. Bertelè (Rome, 1956). See on this, M. M. Šitikov, "Konstantinopol' i venecianskaja trgovlja v pervoj polovine XV v. po dannym knigi šchetov Džakomo Badoera," *VizVrem* 30 (1969), 48–62.

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., P. Schreiner, "Kupcy i tovary Pričernomor'ja: fragment vizantijskoj kontorskoj knigi," *Byzantinobulgarica* 7 (1981), 218, and particularly materials gathered in his monograph, *Texte zur spätbyzantinischen Finanz- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte in Handschriften der Bibliotheca Vaticana* (Vatican City, 1991). I am grateful to Prof. K.-P. Matschke, who called my attention to this book.

<sup>23</sup> F. Miklosich and J. Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*, 6 vols. (Vienna, 1860–90), 2: 375.7–13, 378.12–13. Another example is Oikonomidès, *Hommes d'affaires*, 64.

<sup>24</sup> For instance, E. D. English, *Enterprise and Liability in Sienese Banking, 1230–1350* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988).

<sup>25</sup> On the medieval "Notkredite," see H. J. Gilomen, "Wucher und Wirtschaft im Mittelalter," *HZ* 250 (1990), 290–94.

<sup>26</sup> D. Gofas, "Ἐμπορικὲς ἐπιχειρήσεις Ἑλλήνων τῆς Κρήτης γύρω στὸ 1300. Πραγματούμενα ΣΤ' διεθνoῦς κρητολογικοῦ συνεδρίου, II (Chaina, 1991), 1–34; "Ενας πρόδρομος τῆς συναλλαγματικῆς ἐκδομῆς ἀπὸ Ἑλληνα ἔμπορο τὸ 1300. Τόμος τιμητικὸς Κ.Μ. Τριανταφύλλου (Patrai, 1990), 209–19; "Μὴ ἀπόφαση τοῦ Δοῦκα τῆς Κρήτης τοῦ δεκάτου τετάρτου αἰῶνα σχετικὴ μὲ μὴ συναλλαγματικὴ," Ἐπιθεώρηση τοῦ ἐμπορικοῦ δικαίου 33 (1982), 341–52. I am grateful to Prof. A. Laiou, who drew my attention to these articles. S. P. Karpov ("Kredit v sisteme ital'janskoj trgovli v Južnom Pričernomor'e [XIII–XV vv.], *VizVrem* 49 [1988], 40–49) emphasizes that various forms of credit existed on the territory of Pontus and Paphlagonia, but all the documents at his disposal are Italian, and we cannot discard the possibility that developed types of credit encompassed, exclusively or primarily, Italian communities.

lack cities and all the amenities of urban life,”<sup>27</sup> Byzantine moralists kept condemning usury.<sup>28</sup>

Byzantine partnerships, called *syntrophiai* (the Greek translation of *societas* or *compagnia*?), are well attested in the documents of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>29</sup> Again we face a difficulty: was the late Byzantine *syntrophia* a new (“pre-capitalist”) phenomenon, somehow equivalent to Western *commenda* or *colleganza*, or did this institution exist, without substantial changes, throughout the entire history of the empire?

We do not have sufficient evidence to postulate the existence of late Byzantine guilds, let alone to study the particular features of this institution. Nicolas Oikonomides is, however, certain that the system of guilds existed in Constantinople and Thessalonike of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and even suggests that the heads of guilds were not, at that time, imperial appointees (as in the tenth century), but rather patrons of their colleagues and organizers of production—“capitalists” as he puts it, enclosing the term in quotation marks.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, what we know about late Byzantine corporations is only a series of designations—*protomakellarios*, *protomaistor*, *protalykarios*; probably, the case of *protalykarios/protalykares* is an exception that allows for better insight into Byzantine corporative organization.

The term *protalykarios* appears in a single document from Thessalonike dated 1415. The document is a stipulation of the operators (διεπνευγούντες) of the salt pan (ἀλική) to pay 100 aspra annually to the hieromonk of the church of St. Paul “out of their income from the operation of the salt pan.” The *protalykarios* was to collect this money from the *rogai* of each operator. The act is signed by two *protalykarioi*, Demetrios Panaretos and Andronikos Kontoskales; the latter is acting with “*syntrophia*,” and forty-five signatures of other members of the corporation follow.<sup>31</sup> The existence of two *protalykarioi* is enigmatic, as is the qualification *syntrophia*. Does the term designate the whole corporation or does Kontoskales represent a particular *societas*? Are the forty-seven men who signed the act of 1415 real workers on the salt pan—the number seems very high—or the shareholders? The term *rogai* seems to support the latter suggestion: the term was applied in Byzantium primarily to designate the “salary” of officials or soldiers,<sup>32</sup> and it is hard to

<sup>27</sup>D. Herlihy, “Family and Property in Renaissance Florence,” in *The Medieval City*, ed. H. A. Miskimin, D. Herlihy, and A. L. Udovich (New Haven-London, 1977), 3 f. Cf. also Benvenuti da Imola, a commentator on Dante, in Gilomen, “Wucher,” 265.

<sup>28</sup>See, e.g., M. A. Poljakovskaja, “Vzgljady Nikolaja Kavasily na rostovščičestvo,” *Antičnaja drevnost’ i srednie veka* (hereafter *ADSV*) 13 (1976), 83–96. It is worth noting that usury is not mentioned in Byzantine manuals of arithmetic: K.-P. Matschke, “Handel und Gewerbe in spätbyzantinischen Rechenbüchern und in der spätbyzantinischen Wirklichkeit,” *Jahrbuch für Geschichte des Feudalismus* 3 (1979), 183–85 (differently interpreted by M. G. Baranova, “Pozdnevizantijskie zadačniki kak istoričeskij istočnik,” *ADSV* 9 [1973], 123). On the Byzantine attitude toward usury in the twelfth century, see A. Laiou, “God and Mammon: Credit, Trade, Profit and the Canonists,” *Tò Βυζάντιο κατὰ τὸν 12ῶν αἰῶνα* (Athens, 1991), 261–96.

<sup>29</sup>Laiou-Thomadakis, “The Byzantine Economy,” 199–201; Oikonomidès, *Hommes d'affaires*, 68–83; Matschke, “Handel und Gewerbe,” 190–96, 198–204; Schreiner, *Texte*, 432 f. On the *commenda* in Caffa and Trebizond, see S. P. Karpov, “Kontrakt kommendy v ital’janskoj torgovle v Južnom Pričernomor’e (XIII–XV vv.),” *VizVrem* 48 (1987), 23–32; the article is based on Italian documents.

<sup>30</sup>Oikonomidès, *Hommes d'affaires*, 108–14.

<sup>31</sup>*Actes de Dionysiou*, ed. N. Oikonomidès (Paris, 1968), no. 14. See, on this document, K.-P. Matschke, *Die Schlacht bei Ankara und das Schicksal von Byzanz* (Weimar, 1981), 144–59.

<sup>32</sup>See P. Lemerle, “‘Roga’ et rente d’état aux Xe–XIe siècles,” *REB* 25 (1967), 77–100. Besides *roga* the document uses the term *misthos* (annual *misthos*) (1.5, 6, 12); it is not clear whether *roga* and *misthos* are

imagine that it denoted the trade income of a guild member. It could, however, signify the regular revenue, the “dividend” paid to a shareholder. If this suggestion is reasonable and the corporation in question was a *societas*, the exploitation of the salt pan in Thessalonike of the early fifteenth century was organized not as the activity of a medieval guild, but in the form of a “pre-capitalist” company as would become typical of the mining industry of the next century. We know little about earlier production of salt in Thessalonike, but we may probably surmise that the church played a larger role in it<sup>33</sup> than is reflected in the act of 1415. In any case, the material provided by this document, interesting as it is, does not suffice for sweeping generalizations.

Another document can be used to argue that a system of shareholding did exist in late Byzantium: the will of the nun Nymphodora, issued in 1445, describes her property that included various buildings given to the monastery of Xeropotamou; among other things she bequeathed the monks with shares (μέρη) of two *trochoi ergastikoi*, probably machines applied for mining or other industrial purposes.<sup>34</sup>

Italian sources introduce us to the world of the merchant in the larger cities of Italy: scholars have studied their double-entry bookkeeping, their households, even the shifts in their mentality connected with the economic changes of the fourteenth century.<sup>35</sup> As for Byzantium, we are aware of but few biographies of the men of affairs, and primarily these are about the external events of their lives.<sup>36</sup> One point, however, should be emphasized: there was no unbridgeable gap between Greek and Italian tradesmen. John Laskaris Kalopheros, a Byzantine *synkletikos*, found a comfortable place in the Italian commercial and diplomatic worlds of the fourteenth century,<sup>37</sup> and on Byzantine soil

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opposed or juxtaposed (as hendiadys) to each other. If *misthos* has here the traditional meaning of salary, the interpretation of the organization as a guild is not impossible, but we have to remember that the salary was paid to the apprentice, whereas the document seems to have dealt with the full-fledged members of the organization. Annual salaries were not typical of Byzantine economic relations.

<sup>33</sup>In 688, Justinian II granted a salt pan to the church of St. Demetrios in Thessalonike: A. Vasiliev, “An Edikt of the Emperor Justinian II, September 688,” *Speculum* 18 (1943), 1–13; H. Grégoire, “Un édit de l’empereur Justinien II, daté de septembre 688,” *Byzantion* 17 (1945), 119–24. In the ninth century, the bishopric of Helenopolis was active in salt production: M. Gedeon, *Νέα βιβλιοθήκη ἐκκλησιαστικῶν συγγραμμάτων* (Constantinople, 1903), col. 13.13–23.

<sup>34</sup>*Actes de Xéropotamou*, ed. J. Bompaire (Paris, 1964), no. 30.29–34.

<sup>35</sup>See, for instance, B. Z. Kedar, *Merchants in Crisis: Genoese and Venetian Men of Affairs and the Fourteenth-Century Depression* (New Haven-London, 1976).

<sup>36</sup>A. E. Laiou-Thomadakis, “The Greek Merchant at the Palaeologan Period: A Collective Portrait,” *Ἀκαδημία Ἀθηνῶν. Πρακτικά* 57 (1982), 96–132; reprinted in her *Gender, Society and Economic Life*, art. viii. See also K.-P. Matschke, “Byzantinische Politiker und byzantinische Kaufleute im Ringen um die Beteiligung am Schwarzmeerhandel in der Mitte des 14. Jh.,” *Mitteilungen des bulgarischen Forschungsinstituts in Österreich* 2.4 (1984), 75–96; idem, “Bemerkungen zu ‘Stadtbürgertum’ und ‘stadtbürgerlichem Geist’ in Byzanz,” *Jahrbuch für Geschichte des Feudalismus* 8 (1984), 265–85; idem, “Bemerkungen zu den sozialen Trägern des spätbyzantinischen Seehandels,” *Byzantinobulgarica* 7 (1981), 253–61; V. N. Zavražin, “K voprosu o ‘novom pre-dprimatel’skom klasse’ v pozdnevizantijskom gorode,” *Naučnye trudy Tjumenskogo universiteta* 35.2 (1976), 149–60, stresses the weakness of the late Byzantine entrepreneurship in comparison with the previous period; unfortunately, the criteria of the comparison are not properly elaborated.

<sup>37</sup>On him, see A. X. Eszer, *Das abenteuerliche Leben des Johannes Laskaris Kalopheros* (Wiesbaden, 1969); D. Jacoby, *Société et démographie à Byzance et en Romanie latine* (London, 1975), art. ix, pp. 189–228; art. x, pp. 378–81. In the fragments of the Greek account books published by Schreiner, the names of the contracting parties are more Muslim than Latin; this must be explained, according to Schreiner (*Texte*, 417), by the fact that these documents deal primarily with goods delivered from the “inner” (mainland) areas. It is quite plausible to conclude that in “merged” enterprises the Italians usually had the upper hand.

numerous mixed, Greco-Italian partnerships were contracted. Probably, the most indicative document describing the activity of a Byzantine man of affairs is a group of letters dated to 1453 and addressed to Nicholas-Isidore in Adrianople (and one letter of this group to a certain Kalokampos).<sup>38</sup> Even though Nicholas-Isidore (who lived on the territory conquered by the Turks) is sometimes called “judge,” he is a resident merchant rather than a functionary, and he deals with the trade of salt and caviar, with the construction of houses, loans, and similar transactions. He is also involved in humanitarian activities (ransoming captives) and cultural life (sending books, organizing a school). Probably, on a smaller scale, Nicholas-Isidore emulated his counterparts in Renaissance Italy.

In his book on the Byzantine civil war of 1341–54, Matschke singled out three categories of the urban population: the nobility of two layers (the upper echelon and the lower nobility), specific urban groups identified as the *mesoi* of Byzantine sources, and “the exploited masses,” the *Unterschichten*.<sup>39</sup> Their characteristics in narrative and rhetorical sources are too vague to become the object of scholarly analysis; as for documents, they rarely mention the actual city workers, while the distinction between the so-called *mesoi* and aristocrats involved in trading activity can be theoretically deduced rather than observed. Nevertheless we may assume that aristocrats participated in the world of commerce: according to Laiou, already in the first half of the fourteenth century a relatively high proportion (18 percent) of Byzantine merchants belonged to the aristocracy.<sup>40</sup> Oikonomides, who established a list of aristocrats connected with commerce (primarily on the basis of the data provided by Badoer’s *libri dei conti*), thinks that this “aristocratic involvement” in trade was a phenomenon of the second half of the fourteenth century which was continued through the first half of the fifteenth, connected with the aristocracy’s loss of landed property to the Serbs and Ottomans.<sup>41</sup>

Oriental sources may contribute to our understanding of Byzantine trade. In Arabic chronicles, for instance, we find information that in 1385 the emperor tried to get permission for Greek merchants to carry on trade in Egypt and Syria; it is indicative that Eliyahu Ashtor interprets this evidence as a manifestation of a precarious situation in Byzantium,<sup>42</sup> a drying up of Constantinople’s supply of spices—so strong are our prejudices against the Byzantine capacity to develop its commerce!

Unquestionably, Greek acts available now present a lopsided image of Byzantine trading activity; they illuminate mainly two spheres of economic life—loans and transactions of property. Even though agricultural properties were often located within the city walls, primarily vineyards and kitchen gardens, the most typical object of urban property is described in the texts as οἶκημα or ὀσπήτιον, i.e., the house. It is not easy to determine whether the terms *oikema* and *hospetion* were synonymous; they could be used inter-

<sup>38</sup>J. Darrouzès, “Lettres de 1453,” *REB* 22 (1964), 72–127. Schreiner (*Texte*, 396–99) raises an important question about the “typology of the merchant”; unfortunately the account books are too fragmentary to permit convincing conclusions, and even the level of circulation of goods is difficult to establish; thus, the anonymous person of text no. 1 is characterized, first, as an “Inhaber eines mittelgrossen Handelsunternehmens” (p. 36) and then as a “(Gross?) Händler” (p. 396).

<sup>39</sup>K.-P. Matschke, *Fortschritt und Reaktion in Byzanz im 14. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1971), 38–62.

<sup>40</sup>Laiou-Thomadakis, “The Greek Merchant,” 105. Cf. Schreiner, *Texte*, 98.

<sup>41</sup>Oikonomides, *Hommes d'affaires*, 120–22; cf. idem, “Byzantium between East and West,” *ByzF* 13 (1988), 328 f.

<sup>42</sup>E. Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ, 1983), 105 f.

changeably, but sometimes we read about *oikemata* surrounded by small *hospetia*.<sup>43</sup> This implies a certain difference, at least in size. The number of houses under one private ownership could be extremely high. The case of Maria Palaiologina, “the lady of the Mongols” (*PLP*, no. 21395), the natural daughter of the emperor Michael VIII, must be considered exceptional; her property, described in an act of 1351, included rural estates, gardens and vineyards, bakeries, and sixty *emphyteutic* houses near Palaioi Phoros in Constantinople.<sup>44</sup> Houses are usually listed in descriptions of aristocratic patrimonies. In the estimate of the dowry of Maria Doblytzene/Deblitzene made in 1384, the *oikemata* in the region (*geitonia*) of St. Demetrios of Thessalonike are appraised at 10 litrae,<sup>45</sup> which forms almost one-half of the entire dowry (22 litrae). In 1377 Constantine Laskaris and his sisters possessed in Serres *hospetia* (the number of which is not defined in the document) as well as a bakery.<sup>46</sup> The dowry of the wife of Theodore Barzanes (*PLP*, no. 2219) was estimated in 1397 at 2200 hyperpyra;<sup>47</sup> it included various houses, some of which had their prices indicated (e.g., 218 and 258 hyperpyra); among these buildings were bakeries and workshops. In 1240 Matthew Perdikarios possessed a vast property in Thessalonike that included vineyards and arable land, as well as eight and one-third houses.<sup>48</sup> In 1313 Kosmas Pankalos handed over to the Constantinopolitan monastery of the Pantokrator land and vineyards near Serres, as well as three *ergasteria* in the *emporion* of Serres, two bakeries in the *kastron* of Serres, and no fewer than ten houses.<sup>49</sup> Theodore Karabas (*PLP*, no. 11075) owned in 1314 nine houses in the *geitonia* of the martyr Menas in Thessalonike, an *oikema* on the Phoros of Staurios, and two houses in the village of Rhabdos,<sup>50</sup> besides vineyards, wine, grain, implements, etc.

This list, which has no claims to be exhaustive, differs drastically from that established by Günter Weiss.<sup>51</sup> Weiss enumerates 30 possessions of both secular and ecclesiastical owners between 1233 and 1445, almost all of a rural character rarely containing buildings or workshops. The difference, probably, can be explained by his principle of selection: Weiss included in his catalogue only those descriptions of properties of which the complete volume was estimated in money. At any rate, we may see (and this is, of course, not unexpected) that some of the late Byzantine aristocrats typically possessed urban properties in Constantinople, Thessalonike, and Serres.

Some documents, as we have seen, mention the price of houses. In 1316 Autoriane, wife of the *sebastos* John Polemianites, advised her brother to sell an unspecified number

<sup>43</sup>MM 1: 312.19–20.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 312–17.

<sup>45</sup>*Actes de Docheiariou*, ed. N. Oikonomidès (Paris, 1984), no. 49. 5–6. See N. Oikonomides, “The Properties of the Deblitzenoi in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,” *Charanis Studies* (New Brunswick, 1980), 180.

<sup>46</sup>*Actes de Lavra*, ed. P. Lemerle et al., 4 vols. (Paris, 1970–82), 3, no. 148.10–12.

<sup>47</sup>MM 2: 347.15.

<sup>48</sup>*Actes de Lavra* 2, no. 70.24–29.

<sup>49</sup>*Actes de Kutlumuş*, ed. P. Lemerle (Paris, 1988), no. 8.12–16.

<sup>50</sup>*Actes de Chilandar*, ed. L. Petit, *VizVrem* 17 (1911), Priloženie, no. 27.21–33 and 27.50.

<sup>51</sup>G. Weiss, “Vermögensbildung der Byzantiner in Privathand: Methodische Fragen einer quantitativen Analyse,” *Byzantina* 11 (1982), 88–92, nos. 27–56. J.-Cl. Cheynet, E. Malamut, and C. Morrisson (“Prix et salaires à Byzance [Xe-XVe siècle],” in *Hommes et richesses dans l’Empire byzantin*, II [Paris, 1991], 353–56) established a list of seventy-six appraisals of houses (mostly between 1281 and 1430), the prices of which are indicated in available sources.

of her houses for 550 hyperpyra.<sup>52</sup> The sons of Perios Lampadenos, *oikeioi* of the emperor (*PLP*, no. 14412), possessed several buildings, of which a bakery was estimated at 50 hyperpyra, a *triklinon* at 160, and a house named “the low mansion” (*hamaipalation*) at 120.<sup>53</sup> The houses of Demetrios Kalamanos and his two brothers in Thessalonike (*PLP*, no. 10221) were estimated at 250 hyperpyra;<sup>54</sup> Martha-Melania, daughter of the *stratopedarch* Petzikopoulos (*PLP*, no. 22529), and her sons sold to Chilandar three large houses for 140 hyperpyra.<sup>55</sup> In 1400/1 Manuel Bouzenos, *oikeios* of the emperor (*PLP*, no. 3018), sold his *oikemata* to Thomas Kallokyres for 270 hyperpyra.<sup>56</sup>

Houses were a substantial part of the property owned by aristocrats, and they were used as security for loans. Thus, Eustathios Kinnamos received as dowry a vineyard and several houses. When he needed money he gave these houses as security for 200 hyperpyra; he also sold some houses of his own. A certain Panopoulos received 300 hyperpyra from Thomas Kallokyres having given him for security a house sold to him by the monastery of Hodegoi.<sup>57</sup>

Not only aristocrats were homeowners: we read in an act about the priest Michael who is said to possess nothing except for two *hospetia*; one of these houses was estimated at 24 hyperpyra only<sup>58</sup>—not surprisingly less than houses of the noble families. John Andronas and his wife Anna sold to the monastery of the Virgin called Jerusalem three houses in the *geitonia* of St. Paramonos in Thessalonike for the small sum of 54 hyperpyra.<sup>59</sup> Anyisia Platyskalitissa sold to Chilandar in the same *geitonia* two *oikemata* for 40 hyperpyra.<sup>60</sup> In 1320 Anna Paxamado, with her brother, received 60 hyperpyra from the monastery of Iviron for three houses located in Thessalonike, in the *geitonia* of Acheiropoietos.<sup>61</sup> In 1326 the same monastery acquired three houses, a small garden, a wine press, and some other immovables in Thessalonike for 100 hyperpyra.<sup>62</sup>

Even though our data are scarce and incidental, we may assert that the lay aristocracy possessed houses (and sometimes artisanal workshops) in substantial numbers; ten houses owned by a single person were not exceptional. Calculation of the average price is difficult, since in many cases the number of houses is not specified; where we are aware of individual prices, they oscillate from 50 to 250 hyperpyra. The houses that belonged to the people of lower status seem to have been less valuable: the meager figures we have gathered above are between 18 and 24 hyperpyra. We do not know whether this difference in price was accounted for by the size of the buildings, by their location, or by the social position of their owners.

<sup>52</sup>H. Hunger and O. Kresten, *Das Register des Patriarchats von Konstantinopel*, I (Vienna, 1981), no. 44, p. 308.4–6.

<sup>53</sup>MM 2: 356.17–21.

<sup>54</sup>*Actes de Zographou*, ed. W. Regel, E. Kurtz, and B. Korablev, *VizVrem* 13 (1907), no. 25. 71–74.

<sup>55</sup>*Actes de Chilandar*, no. 112.35–41.

<sup>56</sup>MM 2: 493.31–32.

<sup>57</sup>Hunger and Kresten, *Register*, I, no. 38, p. 290.6–8; MM 2: 380.19–26.

<sup>58</sup>MM 2: 339.11–16.

<sup>59</sup>*Actes de Chilandar*, no. 25.26–27.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 106.36–38. M. Sjuzjumov, “Predprinimatel'stvo v vizantijskom gorode,” *ADSV* 4 (1966), 20 n. 11, affirms that houses in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were cheaper than in the sixth century.

<sup>61</sup>F. Dölger, *Aus den Schatzkammern des Heiligen Berges* (Munich, 1948), no. 111.28=*Actes d'Iviron*, III, ed. J. Lefort et al. (Paris, 1994), no. 78.28.

<sup>62</sup>*Actes d'Iviron*, III, no. 84.32.

The data collected by Michel Balard from the Genoese notarial acts of 1389/90 provide the prices of houses in Pera: one house was valued at 450 hyperpyra, another at 600, and two houses located near a soap manufacture cost an exorbitant sum of 4,000.<sup>63</sup> Balard notes that these figures are higher than those of the end of the thirteenth century, even taking into consideration the devaluation of Byzantine coins, but they are also substantially higher than those cited in the contemporary Greek documents collected by Jean Claude Cheynet, Elisabeth Malamut, and Cécile Morrisson (see note 51). Is this difference accidental, or does it show that the immovable properties in Pera were better or simply more expensive than those of the Greek population? The data are too scanty to draw a conclusion.

Besides houses, documents mention time and again workshops belonging to aristocrats (and other city dwellers?). Thus, circa 1360 Bryennisa bequeathed to her relative Magistrina (*PLP*, no. 16039) some immovables near Mikra Pyle (in Constantinople?) that included, besides a garden and some houses, a bakery and three *ergasteria*.<sup>64</sup> In 1400 a *myrepsikon ergasterion* (a shop for the production or sale of unguents and perfums) near Kynegou Pyle in Constantinople belonged to Kaukania and John Antiocheites Kaloeidas; it was estimated at 200 hyperpyra.<sup>65</sup> In the same year, Theodora, widow of Astrapyres, possessed a *kapelikon ergasterion* in the quarter of Vlanka in Constantinople;<sup>66</sup> she gave it as security for her debt of 85 hyperpyra. We can only guess to what extent these numbers were determined by the menacing political situation circa 1400.

The owners rented out their houses.<sup>67</sup> The concentration of a significant number of houses in private hands leads to the conclusion that houses were in high demand in late Byzantine cities, that the "real estate industry" flourished. We may hypothesize that this was somehow connected with the influx of Byzantines into the cities. We have no figures concerning the fluctuation of the urban population in the fourteenth century, but we have a representative cross-section of the demographic changes in southern Macedonia during the first half of that century, and it is commonly held that the countryside saw a decrease of population in these years.<sup>68</sup> The political instability of the period seems to provide us with a sufficient explanation of this depopulation: Turkish inroads and civil wars took their toll. But was political instability the only cause of the depletion of rural areas in the fourteenth century? The comparison with the Italian situation permits us to approach the problem from a completely different standpoint: David Herlihy's calculations demonstrate that at the same time a demographic plunge took place in the rural

<sup>63</sup> M. Balard, *La Romanie génoise*, I (Rome, 1978), 197.

<sup>64</sup> MM 1: 391.32–392.2. On the case of Magistrina, see *Les registres des actes du patriarchat de Constantinople*, ed. J. Darrouzès, 8 vols. (Paris, 1932–79), V, nos. 2,424–27. The Mikra Pyle is not mentioned in R. Janin's *Constantinople byzantine* (Paris, 1964).

<sup>65</sup> MM 2: 358.12–13.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.9–14.

<sup>67</sup> K.-P. Matschke, "Grund- und Hauseigentum in und um Konstantinopel in spätbyzantinischer Zeit," *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (1984)/IV, 125.

<sup>68</sup> A. E. Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society in the Late Byzantine Empire* (Princeton, NJ, 1977), 266; see also N. K. Kondov, "Demographische Notizen über die Landbevölkerung aus dem Gebiet des Unteren Strymon in der ersten Hälfte des XIV. Jahrhunderts," *Etudes balkaniques* 2–3 (1965), 261–72; D. Jacoby, *Société et démographie à Byzance et en Romanie latine* (London, 1975), art. III, pp. 161–86; A. Kazhdan, "Novye issledovanija po vizantijskoj demografii," *VizVrem* 29 (1969), 307–10.

areas around Pistoia and in many other places,<sup>69</sup> and the low birthrate of the Tuscan urban population was compensated by the immigration of peasants into cities.<sup>70</sup> Accordingly we may surmise that a part of the population of the Byzantine countryside moved into cities in the fourteenth century forming there a layer of potential tenants. The evidence of such migration is meager but not completely nonexistent. Thus, in the *praktikon* of 1321 six peasant families are registered who moved from their villages to Thessalonike and continued to pay rent to the monastery of Lavra; one of these settlers is described as the son of a butcher, another a cutter of marble.<sup>71</sup> The influx of such families made the “real estate industry” profitable.

The lay nobility, or at least a part of it, was active in renting out their houses; it seems, however, that ecclesiastical and monastic institutions stood apart from this enterprise. It is usually thought that Byzantine monasteries obtained vast properties within city walls.<sup>72</sup> This thesis, however, must be checked. According to Margarita Poljakovskaja, no less than twenty houses in Thessalonike belonging to Athonian monasteries are mentioned in the available sources. Certainly, this figure is immeasurably lower than the real number of monastic buildings within the city, but the insignificance of it—in comparison with the number of houses in the hands of secular owners (up to sixty in one “household”!)—is striking. Moreover, many inventories of monastic immovables do not mention urban elements at all. Thus, the chrysobull of Andronikos II of 1298, listing the possessions of Lavra both near and in Thessalonike, itemizes only rural properties: villages, *metochia*, fields, vineyards, mills, and so on;<sup>73</sup> this rural character of Lavra’s possessions did not change in the first half of the fourteenth century.<sup>74</sup> Only land (γῆ and *choraphia*) is named in the *praktikon* of the property of the Zographou monastery of 1294.<sup>75</sup> The list of the

<sup>69</sup>D. Herlihy, *Medieval and Renaissance Pistoia* (New Haven, 1967), 57–71; idem, *Cities and Society* (as in note 1), art. VII, p. 3 f.

<sup>70</sup>Herlihy, *Cities and Society*, art. XI, p. 182 f.

<sup>71</sup>*Actes de Lavra* 2, no. 109.53, 225, 270, 271, 373, 425. See Ks. Chvostova, “Nekotorye voprosy vnutrennej trgovli i torgovoj politiki v Vizantii XIV–XV vv.,” *VizVrem* 50 (1989), 41 f.

<sup>72</sup>See particularly articles by M. A. Poljakovskaja: “K voprosu o karaktere gorodskoj i prigorodnoj monastyrskoj sobstvennosti v pozdnej Vizantii,” *ADSV* 4 (1966), 75–93; “Metochi v gorodskom i prigorodnom chozjajstve pozdnej Vizantii,” *Permskij universitet: Učenyje zapiski* 143 (1966), 93–97; “Monastyrskie vladenija v Fessalonike i ee prigorodnom rajone v XIV–načale XV vv.,” *ADSV* 3 (1965), 17–46; *Monastyrskie vladenija v gorode Serry i prigorodnom rajone v XIV v.*, *VizVrem* 27 (1967), 310–18. The data collected by Poljakovskaja were supplemented and corrected by B. Ferjančić, “Posedi vizantijskich provincijskich manastira u gradovima,” *ZRV* 19 (1980), 209–50, who distinguishes the lands possessed by close-by and remote monasteries, but does not categorize specifically urban (shops, bakeries, and so forth) and agricultural (gardens, etc.) immovables. In the same vein A. Bryer, “The Late Byzantine Monastery in Town and Countryside,” *Studies in Church History* 16 (1979), 222–25, notes that monasteries owned lands and dependent peasants and that rural monasteries maintained *metochia* in the capital, but he does not discuss the nature of the monastic urban property. M. Živojinović, in a recent article (“The Houses of Hilandar Monastery in Thessalonike during the Fourteenth Century,” in *To Hellenikon: Studies in Honor of Sp. Vryonis, Jr.*, I [New Rochelle, NY, 1993], 465–74), deals primarily with the architectural image of buildings, not with their economic functions. Cf. also D. Papachryssanthou, “Maisons modestes à Thessalonique au XIVE siècle,” *Ametos ste mneme F. Apostolopoulou* (Athens, 1984), 254–67.

<sup>73</sup>*Actes de Lavra* 2, no. 89.80–150.

<sup>74</sup>See the chrysobull of 1329: *Actes de Lavra* 3, no. 118.77–154.

<sup>75</sup>*Actes de Zographou*, no. 52. On the date, see G. Ostrogorsky, *Pour l’histoire de la féodalité byzantine* (Brussels, 1954), 270 n. 1.

possessions of the monastery of All-Saints transferred by Helena Dušan to Lavra in 1361 comprises agricultural possessions only.<sup>76</sup> The Chilandar monastery owned in 1299 *choraphia*, olive groves, vineyards, gardens, and mills, but no specific urban properties, and its possessions retain the same agricultural pattern in the fourteenth century.<sup>77</sup>

In some monastic inventories (and similar lists) *oikemata* are included. Thus, the chrysobull of Andronikos II of 1322 itemizes rural properties of the Xenophon monastery and adds to them recent acquisitions in Thessalonike—houses (of an unqualified quantity) and three *ergasteria*.<sup>78</sup> In 1394 Manuel II listed in a chrysobull *oikemata* of the Athonian monastery Pantokrator in various towns—Chrysopolis, Eletheroupolis, and Christoupolis.<sup>79</sup> In 1415 the monastery of the Virgin of the Life-receiving Source possessed *oikemata* on Lemnos—in both the *kastron* and the *emporion*.<sup>80</sup> In 1428–43 Lavra owned in Aenos several *oikemata* and a *hospetion*,<sup>81</sup> but it is possible that these houses were parts of rural rather than urban milieux, being surrounded by *choraphia* and fruit trees.

An act of exchange of properties between two monasteries, Chortaites and Iviron, signed circa 1320, enumerates the immovables owned by these monasteries in and near Thessalonike; unfortunately the end of the document is lost.<sup>82</sup> In general statements (1.19–20, 35, 36, 53) the scribe speaks of the court (αὐλή) with houses; one clause, however, is more specific and shows the rural character of, at least, one of the properties that is itemized (1.61–62) as “a bakery, two wine presses, six mulberry trees and a garden.”

It seems that urban properties were less substantial in the monastic economy than in the households of secular owners: not only do monastic inventories and imperial chrysobulls usually ignore houses, but even when mentioning them fiscal officials describe them summarily, without indication of precise numbers of buildings. It seems to some extent exceptional that several documents related to Serres reveal a greater interest in urban properties than the acts dealing with Constantinople and Thessalonike; thus, the chrysobull of Andronikos II of 1309 lists three *oikemata* of the monastery of Menoikeion in Serres and defines them as two *ergasteria* and a bakery;<sup>83</sup> in the chrysobull of Stefan Dušan of 1345, the urban properties of Menoikeion in Serres are described as “various *ergasteria* near the Imperial gate and other various *oikemata* for rent (ἐνοικιακά).”<sup>84</sup> Menoikeion was not the only monastery to possess immovables in Serres; Chilandar also kept a house in Serres in the fourteenth century.<sup>85</sup> The urban property of Kosmas Pankalos in Serres (see above) was donated to the Constantinopolitan monastery of the Pantokrator and eventually transferred to the monastery of Koutlounous: it included houses, a bakery, and three *ergasteria*.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>76</sup> *Actes de Lavra* 3, no. 140.12–20.

<sup>77</sup> *Actes de Chilandar*, no. 13.50–81; cf. nos. 31–33, 58.

<sup>78</sup> *Actes de Xenophon*, ed. D. Papachryssanthou (Paris, 1986), no. 17.57–59.

<sup>79</sup> *Actes de Pantokrator*, ed. V. Kravari (Paris, 1991), no. 16.16–19. See the patriarch Antony IV's confirmation: MM 2: 217.34–35, 218.5 (with a wrong date).

<sup>80</sup> *Actes de Lavra* 3, no. 164.4–5.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 166.9–15.

<sup>82</sup> *Actes d'Iviron*, III, no. 76.

<sup>83</sup> A. Guillou, *Les archives de Saint-Jean-Prodrôme sur le mont Ménécée* (Paris, 1955), no. 4.25.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 39.67–68.

<sup>85</sup> *Actes de Chilandar*, nos. 62.55–56, 63.34–36, 63.62–64. The house of Nikephoros Amaxas (no. 138.44) is, evidently, a different property.

<sup>86</sup> *Actes de Koutlounous*, no. 18.41–44.

The question arises as to whether the attention paid to urban properties in the monastic documents referring to Serres is accidental or whether the monasteries of Menoikeion, Chilandar, and Koutlounous found in Serres a more beneficial terrain than in Thessalonike; moreover, we have noticed that various monasteries acquired houses in other provincial towns, such as Chrysopoulis, Aenos, and others. If this observation is correct (but unfortunately the data available are too scanty), we may hypothesize that the situation in Thessalonike differed from that in Serres and other (smaller?) towns in which monastic property was more strongly enrooted.<sup>87</sup>

If monastic chrysobulls and similar acts usually omit the possession of houses in Thessalonike and, possibly, in other places—which does not yet prove that monasteries did not possess them but probably only that they paid more attention to their rural estates—some acts mention workshops and houses donated to monasteries or ecclesiastical institutions. Especially rich in data is the chrysobull of John V of 1342 confirming a grant of a monk Niphon to Lavra in which the properties of the xenon of St. Panteleemon in Constantinople are catalogued. They included houses, various workshops, “tables” of exchange, and so on;<sup>88</sup> Lavra had to receive some revenue from these enterprises.

Various donations and sales of houses to monasteries or churches are registered in documents that have survived. For instance, in 1321 Alexander Eurippiotes, *megas allagios* (PLP, no. 6321), was granted the village Pougion to remunerate him for the donation of houses (in unspecified number) to the church of Hodegetria in Thessalonike.<sup>89</sup> In 1381, upon entering the monastery of Docheiariou, Stamatios-Simon donated to this institution his *oikema* located in the *geitonia* of Hippodromos, in Thessalonike, as well as his vineyard outside the city.<sup>90</sup> Alexander Doukas Sarantenos and his wife sold in 1322 three houses to Chilandar in the *geitonia* of St. Paramonos, in Thessalonike.<sup>91</sup> The number of examples can easily be increased, and some cases have already been mentioned above.

These acquisitions, however, do not always appear in inventories. Thus, in 1320 Basil Modenos sold to Chilandar several *oikemata* in Thessalonike as well as a vineyard and some land; in the chrysobull of Andronikos III of 1321, listing the monastery’s possessions, only the vineyard of Modenos is included.<sup>92</sup> Another case is the property of Maria Deblitzene which, as we have seen, contained substantial urban property. In the contract of 1419, Theodora, Maria’s daughter, states, however, that her mother, before her death,

<sup>87</sup>The problem of the so-called typology of late Byzantine towns has been raised by V. Hrochova, *Byzantská města ve 13.-15. století* (Prague, 1967), and “Současný stav bádání o středověkém městě v jihovýchodní Evropě,” *Československý časopis historický* 4 (1977), 585–606; cf. also V. N. Zavražin, “Nekotorye problemy istorii pozdnevizantijskogo goroda v novejšich issledovanijach,” *VizVrem* 41 (1980), 273 f. I am afraid that the clear categorization suggested by Hrochova is—the scarcity of sources considered—premature; thus, on p. 88 of the book, Hrochova placed Mistra both in the first category (great cities—*emporia* [!, the term *emporion* did not designate a great city]) and in the second category (the centers of vast regions).

<sup>88</sup>*Actes de Lavra* 3, no. 123.99–160. On this document, see F. Dölger and P. Wirth, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches*, V (Munich-Berlin, 1965), no. 2885.

<sup>89</sup>*Actes de Chilandar*, no. 67.3–9.

<sup>90</sup>*Actes de Docheiariou*, no. 47.12–14.

<sup>91</sup>*Actes de Chilandar*, no. 84.20–27.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 53.13–18; cf. no. 63.27. In another purchase deed of 1329, Modenos’ estate is defined as a *zeugolatheion* with houses, vineyards, and gardens (*ibid.*, no. 118.10–12).

donated to the monastery of Docheiariou *choraphia* and *paroikoi*,<sup>93</sup> but no urban possessions are mentioned.

There are some cases that show how monks were getting rid of the houses they had been granted. In 1390 the widow of Sanianos donated to the monastery of Hodegoi a house (in Constantinople?) that the monastery sold right away to a certain Panopoulos.<sup>94</sup> The workshops inherited by Magistrina from Bryennisa (see above) were given by Magistrina to the monastery of St. Paul of Latros, which did not hold them for long, but sold houses and three *ergasteria* to a secular owner, a certain Synadene.<sup>95</sup> When the monastery of Vatopedi sold to another monastery, the Zographou, its *metochion* in the *geitonia* of St. Pelagia, in Thessalonike in 1270, the scribe inserted in the charter a clause "in order to buy for this price a more profitable estate."<sup>96</sup>

Certainly, the data are too insignificant to allow a persuasive solution, but are we not at least to ask whether monastic institutions were less interested in urban properties than secular owners. A patriarchal letter of 1401 graphically describes the attitude of a nun toward her property in Constantinople. In the region of Kynegon there was an allotment of a certain Maurommates with houses, trees, and vines; Maurommates left the city, and the allotment was administered by his relative, the nun Petraleiphine. The nun neglected the land, destroyed the plants, and the deserted place was haunted by casual passersby, so that the gardener, unable to prevent frequent thefts, was thinking of fleeing. A neighbor, Mark Palaiologos Iagaris, intervened: he built a fence, cleared the lot of stones (?), and planted it.<sup>97</sup> Again, we have here no more than an isolated case, but it somehow reflects the different approach of a secular landowner and a nun toward urban property. The nun—at least this particular nun, Petraleiphine—was uninterested in keeping the house and its garden in proper condition. Certainly, we may assume that other nuns, monks, or monastic communities had a different attitude toward urban immovables.

Monasteries exploited their immovables, usually in a medieval way, renting them out *ad vitam*. A patriarchal letter of 1400 confirms a contract between several monasteries in Thessalonike and a certain Constantine Samaminthes who rented for the term of his life a *myrepsikon ergasterion* that belonged to four ecclesiastical institutions.<sup>98</sup> The baker Manuel Chrysoberges "bought" (ἡγόρασε) from the nunnery of the Lady Martha a house for 14 hyperpyra;<sup>99</sup> in fact, the deal was a lease, since Chrysoberges stipulated that he would pay an annual rent, and after the death of the baker and his wife (if they died childless) the nunnery would inherit the *hospetion*. A similar contract was concluded between Marinós Manikaïtes and the monastery of Dionysiou in 1463. Manikaïtes gave to the monastery 10 nomismata for a workshop located on Lemnos (which was conquered by the Ottomans only in 1479); he was to dwell in the place until his death, whereafter the building had to be returned to the monastery.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>93</sup> *Actes de Docheiariou*, no. 57.5–8; cf. no. 58.3–4.

<sup>94</sup> MM 2: 380.19–26. On this case, see A. Failler, "Une donation des époux Sanianoï aux monastère des Hodégoi," *REB* 34 (1976), 111–17.

<sup>95</sup> MM 1: 392.1–2.

<sup>96</sup> *Actes de Zographou*, no. 8.6–9.

<sup>97</sup> MM 2: 497.2–17. On this letter, see Darrouzès, *Les regestes*, VI, no. 3210.

<sup>98</sup> MM 2: 525 f.

<sup>99</sup> MM 2: 441.25–33. On the date, see Darrouzès, *Les regestes*, VI, no. 3169.

<sup>100</sup> *Actes de Dionysiou*, no. 30.2–6.

Side by side with these traditional (and I would even say feudal) forms of lord-tenant relations, new forms were developing that have some features of “entrepreneurship” and were, in a certain sense, more advanced than similar institutions in contemporary Italy.

One act of 1264 is a contract of lease.<sup>101</sup> The monastery of Iviron rented out to Nicholas Kamoudes and three of his successors its *metochion* located in the *geitonia* of St. Paramonos in Thessalonike on the condition of an annual payment of a (nominal?) sum of 4 nomismata; the property included a church and six houses (1.22–23). What is noteworthy about this contract is the personality of the locator: Nicholas Kamoudes was a craftsman, a saddler (1.8). Under the guise of a medieval lease for four generations with a nominal rent, a new enterprise was probably developing, and Kamoudes evidently counted on the profit from managing these houses.

One of the most important innovations in the economic life of fourteenth-century Tuscany was the so-called *mezzadria*, which Herlihy defines as an agrarian contract that established a new form of rent: instead of high and fixed payments, the *mezzadria* obliged the tenant to give half of the harvest to the landlord in return for which the landlord was to provide the capital (oxen, stock, seeds, and so on) needed for agricultural production. Herlihy stresses that the *mezzadria* did not create a capitalist system but remained within the framework of the “gift economy,” the landlord being protector and patron of the tenant.<sup>102</sup>

Late Byzantium knew as well energetic entrepreneurs who ventured to improve productivity on and increase income from rented properties. It is difficult to interpret these cases. Unlike the Tuscan *mezzadria*, cases of late Byzantine “improved rent” are few, and their legal nature is poorly defined; what is even worse, we do not know to what extent this “improved rent” was an innovation of the fourteenth century. Since our knowledge about the agrarian history of Byzantium is almost blank, it is easy to hypothesize that the empire inherited this kind of relation from the Roman past. Given all this, let us analyze several cases of “improved rent” reflected in the available documents.

The simplest case is described in an act of 1314, a deal struck between the monastery of Iviron and a certain Constantine Marmaras.<sup>103</sup> The act does not say who this Constantine was, and the suggestion that he was a marbleworker (in accordance with his second name) cannot be substantiated. Be that as it may, Constantine acquired three houses in the *geitonia* of Acheiropoietos (in Thessalonike) near the property of the Iviron. After a certain period of time, the monastery, referring to its right of neighborhood, urged Marmaras to yield these houses to the monks and paid him 70 nomismata as the price of the allotment and 40 nomismata for the improvements made on the land. Since the payment for the improvements surpassed half of the price of the holding, we may hypothesize that they were substantial.

The convent of Panagia Pausolye in Constantinople rented out its garden to the Spyridones brothers who stipulated that they would plant a vineyard there; after five years, the tenants were to provide the convent with half of the produced wine, whereas the convent paid the brothers six hyperpyra at the time of the harvest.<sup>104</sup> The ameliora-

<sup>101</sup> *Actes d'Iviron*, III, no. 60.

<sup>102</sup> Herlihy, *Medieval and Renaissance Pistoia*, 136; cf. also his *Cities and Society* (as in note 1), art. xiv, p. 12 f.

<sup>103</sup> *Actes d'Iviron*, III, no. 73.

<sup>104</sup> MM 2: 499 f.

tion was successful: whereas the garden had barely given 20 hyperpyra of income, the half of the revenue that the convent received from its tenants amounted to 50 hyperpyra. Unfortunately, one of the brothers perished, and the situation deteriorated. A less successful case is described in a patriarchal letter of 1401. The convent of St. Andrew in Tribunal, located in Constantinople, rented out a vineyard to a certain Luke and his companion on the condition that the tenants would ameliorate the land in four years and then pay the convent half of their harvest. Luke failed to fulfill his stipulation, and the contract was canceled.<sup>105</sup>

The litigation that took place in 1400/1 between Irene Palaiologina and her relatives—her brother Andronikos and her uncle David—about their rights on the land of the church of the Immaculate Virgin in Constantinople reveals some elements of amelioration; it does not matter for our purpose whether Irene acted legitimately or not, but she reportedly planted a vineyard on the property (or a pasture? *voμή* has both meanings) of the church, and at the same time the unidentified Pepagomenos planted a vineyard on the driveway connecting the same property with the thoroughfare. Andronikos, on the other hand, also tried to exploit the ecclesiastical property for economic ends; at any rate, Irene accused her brother of transforming the shrine into a storage for grapes.<sup>106</sup> Also in Constantinople, a certain Manuel Katalanos rented a piece of land owned by the Peribleptos monastery for the term of his life; he stipulated that he would transform the land into a vineyard. The document guaranteed the renter unrestricted ownership, whatever that meant, and allowed him, after payment of an additional 20 hyperpyra, to transfer the property to his heirs.<sup>107</sup>

Leasing for half of a harvest was well known in Byzantium long before the fourteenth century; it is mentioned in the Farmer's Law, among others texts. There is no evidence, however, that the seventh-century lease presupposed the amelioration of land or any payment on the part of the landowner (as in the case of the Spyridones brothers) or granting favorable conditions to the renter (such as the exemption from payment for certain years as in the case of Luke). The renters of the ninth to eleventh centuries were *paroikoi*,<sup>108</sup> who eventually were transformed into dependent peasants, and not well-off entrepreneurs like Spyridones and Luke.

The late Byzantine "improved" or "ameliorated" rent contributed to the growth of productivity and to the increase of agricultural income. At the same time, a more complicated form of "ameliorated" rent began to appear in Byzantium: in some cases the renter's payment was not determined "post factum," as a part (the half) of his yield, but was fixed in the contract so that the renter appropriated all the income above the contractual figure.

These cases are few and known more from legal deliberations than contracts. One of the earliest known cases is a litigation described in an act of 1295.<sup>109</sup> According to this document, a certain priest, Nicholas Platyskalites by name, allegedly rented from the

<sup>105</sup>MM 2: 506 f.

<sup>106</sup>MM 2: 457.6–9 and 32–33; see commentary Darrouzès, *Les registes*, VI, no. 3182.

<sup>107</sup>H. Hunger, "Zu den rechtlichen Inedita des konstantinopler Patriarchatsregisters im cod. Vindob. hist. gr. 48," *REB* 24 (1966), 59.

<sup>108</sup>M. Kaplan, *Les hommes et la terre à Byzance du VI<sup>e</sup> au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1992), 355, emphasizes that by that time the Roman distinction between the renter-*emphyteutes* and the half-dependent *paroikos* had a tendency to be blurred.

<sup>109</sup>*Actes d'Iviron*, III, no. 67.21–31.

monastery of Iviron a piece of land of approximately 30 modioi, having stipulated an annual payment of three nomismata and a promise to produce improvements, to wit plant a vineyard. The monks, however, accused Platyskalites of deception and canceled the contract. Leaving aside colorful details (Platyskalites called the Iberian monks Armenians and Bogomils [1.51–52]), we may assume that the monks, having seen the growing productivity of the land they had rented out, decided to request its return. Similarly, such was the background of the monastery's litigation with the Argyropouloi.<sup>110</sup> The Argyropouloi were considered noble in Thessalonike, and at the same time they were active in the fur trade, in financing, and in buying houses.<sup>111</sup> In 1421 they were defendants in a case instituted by Iviron. According to the judicial decision, Iviron owned in Thessalonike, near the Golden Gate, a complex of gardens that the monks leased to small tenants collecting from all of them 59½ hyperpyra. In 1404, they changed the system and rented the gardens to the Argyropouloi for a lesser sum; we are not told why the payment was decreased. The Argyropouloi spent a substantial amount of money (17,000 aspra) on the amelioration of the land, and managed to increase the payments (called *morta* or *pakton*) of their tenants to 115 hyperpyra, not counting the “gifts” in kind. The monks decided to take the gardens back; they won the case, and the emperor Manuel II confirmed the verdict of the tribunal.

A similar case was brought before a judge in Thessalonike in 1419. A certain Dadas rented from the monastery of Xenophon five grocery shops and three large houses in the *geitonia* of Asomatoi, located in the Great Stoa; he stipulated that he would pay to the monastery three hyperpyra. Evidently, Xenophon was unable to exploit the immovables properly. The entrepreneur, however, transformed the shops into a large wine market, and his income grew to the substantial figure of 30 hyperpyra. Restructuring, naturally, required major expenses. The ecclesiastical tribunal that heard this case decided that Dadas' sons (he died some years beforehand) had the choice of either paying an increased sum or of canceling the contract after having received compensation for the amelioration undertaken by their father. The document contains a theoretical conclusion that justifies the change of conditions, since the law of *emphyteusis*, said the judge, is not applicable to *ergasteria* and houses. And which lord, he continues, will bear calmly that his property is bringing such an income that flows to alien hands and not to the actual proprietor!<sup>112</sup>

The act of 1432 is not the minutes of a judicial session but a contract. It presents a similar enterprise: the New Monastery (Nea Mone) in Thessalonike had a workshop producing linseed oil; a certain Turk (or, probably, but not necessarily we should read it as a proper name, Tourkos?) used it and paid a rent the amount of which is not defined. Then Constantine Manklabites came and offered to pay eight nomismata for the *ergasterion*, promising amelioration and improvement of the quality of work.<sup>113</sup>

We may state that monasteries—as far as the available documentation allows us to

<sup>110</sup>Dölger, *Aus den Schatzkammern*, no. 102; cf. also *ibid.*, no. 24. On this case, A. Kazhdan, “Novye materialy po vnutrennej istorii Vizantii X-XV vv.,” *VizVrem* 13 (1958), 305 f, and (in French) “Vita materiale e paesaggio rurale,” in *La civiltà bizantina: oggetti e messaggi*, ed. A. Guillou (Rome, 1991), 201–4; Ferjančić, “Posedi” (as in note 72), 221 f. Ks. Chvostova, *Osobennosti agrarnopravovykh otnošenij v pozdnej Vizantii* (Moscow, 1968), 259, and especially Matschke, *Schlacht* (as in note 31), 159–75.

<sup>111</sup>MM 2: 374.32, 472.9, 493.4–5.

<sup>112</sup>*Actes de Xénophon*, no. 32.29–33. On this case, Chvostova, “Nekotorye voprosy” (as in note 71), 42.

<sup>113</sup>*Actes de Lavra* 3, no. 168.4–7.

judge—were not an active force of economic progress in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but the local enterprises were energetic, even though not on such an expansive scale as the leading Italian companies. Even though the evidence is scanty, some forms of late Byzantine enterprise (shareholding in salt production, the “real estate industry,” the agrobusiness of the Argyropouloi) remind one of a “pre-capitalistic” organization of economy. In other words, even though it is impossible to affirm that Byzantium reached by the middle of the fourteenth century the stage of “pre-capitalist” entrepreneurship, there were in Byzantium individual entrepreneurs of the new type. Similarly, even though there was no Byzantine Renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, there were individual humanists who could find a common tongue with the cultural elite of the new northern Italy.

Recently, Oikonomides suggested the following picture of the late Byzantine economic evolution: “During the Palaiologan period, the large Byzantine cities developed similarities with Western ones, while the countryside remained faithful to tradition and, with time, came to look more and more oriental.”<sup>114</sup> My observations seem to coincide with the first section of his statement, but they introduce, I suppose, certain nuances: the new tendencies (whether we call them “pre-capitalist” or not, does not matter) were noticeable not only in commerce proper but in dealings with city immovables and in what can conventionally be called “agrobusiness.” The late Byzantine enterprise found fertile soil in trading and leasing houses and in exploiting “improved” gardens, vineyards, and so on. Laiou’s “unexpected” observation concerning the export of grain from (war depleted) Thrace<sup>115</sup> shows that this enterprise was far from being totally unsuccessful; probably, the countryside was not completely alien to new tendencies. Another nuance is the difference between lay (and aristocratic) enterprise and the monastic household that seems to be less businesslike, more traditional, and, at the same time, inclined to fleece energetic entrepreneurs when the judicial system and imperial support allowed monks to do so.

We often speak about the economic decline of Byzantium in the last centuries of its existence. Some scholars stress the external impact (Turkish invasion,<sup>116</sup> Italian domination of the Byzantine market), others accuse feudal institutions<sup>117</sup> or the clumsy role of

<sup>114</sup>Oikonomides, “Byzantium between East and West” (as in note 41), 321. Ks. Chvostova also questions (or at least, moderates) the theory of the economic crisis in the late Byzantine city (“Nekotorye voprosy,” 36–46); she stresses the development of the money economy in this period, but puts emphasis not on private entrepreneurship but on state policy and on the role of monastic institutions in trade and manufacture.

<sup>115</sup>Laiou, “Byzantine Economy” (as in note 16), 220. In an old (and forgotten) article by M. Andreeva (“Torgovyy dogovor Vizantii i Dubrovnika i istorija ego podgotovki,” *BSI* 6 [1935–36], 115–17, 127–30), we find important data on the flourishing agriculture in the Peloponnese of the fifteenth century and on the export of grain from “Romania” to Dubrovnik. According to Andreeva, in the fourteenth century Romania provided only 20% of the grain exported to Dubrovnik from the Sicilian kingdom; in the fifteenth century, the amount of importation from Romania increased significantly. I. Sakâzov (“Bulgarische Wirtschaftsgeschichte,” in *Grundriss der slavischen Philologie und Kulturgeschichte* 5 [1929], 103 f), referring to Pegolotti, wrote that in Bulgaria the large estates had exported grain of good quality and in substantial amounts.

<sup>116</sup>The role of the Turkish invasion deserves a reconsideration: E. Zachariadou, “Ἐφήμερες ἀπόπειρες γιὰ αὐτοδιοίκηση στὶς ἐλληνικὲς πόλεις κατὰ τὸν ΙΔ΄ καὶ ΙΕ΄ αἰῶνα,” *Ariadne* 5 (1989), 345–52, demonstrated that the Turkish raids, disrupting links between the provincial city and the capital, between the city and its countryside, contributed to the evolvement of urban independence and city self-administration.

<sup>117</sup>E. T. Gorjanov, “Vizantijskij gorod XIII–XV vv.,” *VizVrem* 13 (1958), 183, sees in “feudal relations” the major hindrance to the development of the late Byzantine city and the cause of its decline. In the revised

Constantinopolitan government. I would like to focus on two points in this regard: First of all, I have tried to show that the inactivity of the Byzantine tradesman is exaggerated. We should not forget that we have more Italian documents than Greek ones, and the quality of the Italian texts (referring to Italy) is incomparably better; they are richer in information. But there is one more aspect that is worth consideration—the crisis of the fourteenth century.

Viewed from outside, especially from Byzantium, the cities of northern Italy seem prosperous in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; in fact, however, the situation there was ambivalent or paradoxical. To use Herlihy's words, "the Italians of the Renaissance period would seem to have had the ingenuity, the business acumen, and the capital of the industrialization of production."<sup>118</sup> But at the same time, the country suffered a grave decline of population,<sup>119</sup> and the propertied classes invested substantial means in agriculture, draining capital from trade enterprises. The Tuscan city became a *città signorile*,<sup>120</sup> and acquired patrician or feudal character; Herlihy even speaks of *la disurbanizzazione* of the city.<sup>121</sup> This phenomenon of the "feudalization" of the city had a broader expansion; thus, Barcelona underwent an economic decline from the second half of the fourteenth century that was reflected in the new ethical value—to live "noble," that is, on rent, without any participation in economic activities.<sup>122</sup>

The "depression" or the "crisis" of the second half of the fourteenth century observable in both Italy and in some transalpine regions used to be explained, by various scholars, by the effect of the Black Death of 1348 and the subsequent demographic decline; it turned out that this decline became evident much before the plague struck. Michael Postan considered the "crisis" the consequence ("nemesis") of the "inordinate expansion" of the earlier Middle Ages.<sup>123</sup> The Black Death seems only to have aggravated the situation. At any rate, we do not know which effects the plague had on the Byzantine economy: its impact was serious in nearby Dubrovnik,<sup>124</sup> and it must have influenced Constan-

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version of this article (in idem, *Pozdnevizantijskij feodalizm* [Moscow, 1962], 240–302), Gorjanov places emphasis on the detrimental impact of Italian merchants. The role of the "feudal factor" in the economic decline of Byzantium is stressed particularly in the article by G. L. Kurbatov and V. I. Rutenburg, "Ziloty i čompi," *VizVrem* 30 (1969), 12–16.

<sup>118</sup> Herlihy, "Family and Property" (as in note 27), 15.

<sup>119</sup> R. S. Lopez, "Market Expansion: The Case of Genoa," *Journal of Economic History* 24 (1964), 448, calculates the population of Genoa at the end of the thirteenth century at 100,000 and a hundred years thereafter at only 60,000. A similar decline can be observed in Florence and other Tuscan cities.

<sup>120</sup> Herlihy, *Cities and Society*, art. XI, p. 189.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. In his profound analysis of the movement of prices in fourteenth-century Florence, Ch.-M. de la Roncière (*Prix et salaires à Florence au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle* [Rome, 1982], 774–77) demonstrates the complexity of the European economy of that period, which reveals, at least partially, an "évolution régressive," "stagnation," and "une détérioration à court terme de la condition ouvrière."

<sup>122</sup> J. S. Amelang, *Honored Citizens of Barcelona: Patrician Culture and Class Relations, 1490–1714* (Princeton, NJ, 1986). The decline took place also in old centers outside the Mediterranean, such as Ghent: see D. Nicholas, *The Metamorphosis of a Medieval City: Ghent in the Age of the Artevelde, 1302–1390* (Lincoln, Nebr.: London, 1987).

<sup>123</sup> M. M. Postan, review of *L'économie rurale et la vie des campagnes dans l'Occident médiéval*, by G. Duby, *EHR* 16 (1963), 197.

<sup>124</sup> A. Kazhdan, "Naemnyj trud v Dubrovniku v XIV veke," *Kratkie soobščeniya Instituta slavjanovedeniya AN SSSR* 17 (1955), 43–45. I. Manken, *Dubrovački patriciat u XIV veku* (Belgrade, 1960), 78, mentions in passing the influence of "the great epidemics" of 1348 and 1363 on the composition of the ruling families in Dubrov-

tinople and its vicinity, but we have no sources and can not but speculate on this topic. It is noteworthy that the scanty evidence concerning Byzantine "pre-capitalist" activity comes from the sources after 1348.

Whether the Black Death reversed the economic advance of Mediterranean cities, or the depression had more profound causes, one point may be stated—"pre-capitalist" development both in Italy and in Byzantium led to a cul-de-sac: neither in Tuscany nor in Constantinople nor in Thessalonike did a capitalist system of production develop. The next step was taken not in areas in which the medieval city reached its apex but on the outskirts of Europe, in England, where medieval town life did not flourish and where the borough, the country township, and not the noble city was the center of trading activity.<sup>125</sup> The major contrast in the late medieval economic development lay not between northern Italy and Byzantium but between the Mediterranean as an entity and "backward," "provincial" England, whose development was not fettered by the strong traditions of medieval urbanism.

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nik. B. Krekić, *Dubrovnik in the 14th and 15th Centuries: A City between East and West* (Norman, Okla., 1972), 40, states that "the middle of the fourteenth century witnessed great changes in the whole eastern coast of the Adriatic," but he limited these changes to political events, primarily to the conflict between Dubrovnik and Serbia (see p. 45). In the comprehensive monograph on Dubrovnik by S. M. Stuard (*A State of Deference: Ragusa/Dubrovnik in the Medieval Centuries* [Philadelphia, 1992]), the Black Plague is treated as a medical event (esp. pp. 46–49) with no reference to its economic significance except for the statement that "almost the entire Slavic migration to town occurred between 1348 and 1350" (p. 118). The Black Death and its impact on the "labor laws" in Dubrovnik is still waiting to be investigated.

<sup>125</sup>E. A. Kosminskij, *Issledovanija po agrarnoj istorii Anglii XIII veka* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1947), 393 f; E. Carus-Wilson in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, ed. M. Postan and E. Rich, II (Cambridge, 1952), 421 f.